

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH

AMENDMENT TO THE FISH CREEK MANAGEMENT PLAN

The following sections of the Fish Creek Management Plan are hereby amended.

Chapter 3, Management Plan, page 45, is amended by adding a new paragraph to read:

This plan is amended to allow selling the timber prior to and separately from an agricultural rights sale. The intent is to harvest the timber in a manner that enhances the agricultural development potential of the Fish Creek project area. All timber harvesting must be completed by 1/1/1995. If no timber sale has occurred by that time, this amendment expires and the original provisions of the plan are in force.

Agricultural Planned Actions, page 46 is amended to read:

The Fish Creek agricultural project is planned and will be implemented jointly by the borough and state. Ideally, development will proceed generally in the following sequence:

1. Adoption of the joint state/borough management plan. -
2. Timber sale*
3. [2.] Completion of baseline studies.
4. [3.] Development of year-round access.
5. [4.] Enactment of a joint state/borough land sale.
- [5. LAND CLEARING AND TIMBER SALVAGE.]
6. Development of utilities and support facilities
(utilities could be developed sooner).

*All timber harvest must be completed by 1/1/1995. If no timber sale has occurred by that time, the original sequence will be in effect.

Agricultural Planned Actions, page 50, Use of timber resources is amended to read:

The farm tracts [TOGETHER WITH THEIR TIMBER RESOURCES] will be sold to the successful applicant/bidder, who could then occupy the land immediately. Farmers will be encouraged to salvage [THE] any remaining timber. See Forestry section for details.

Agricultural guideline 1, page 51, is amended to read:

Windbreaks will be required. Their location must be shown on the farm conservation plan. These windbreaks will be rows of natural vegetation a minimum of 30 feet wide. Where the existing vegetation is overmature and sparse, wider windbreaks are encouraged. The Division of Agriculture, SCS, or the Matanuska-Susitna Borough may require wider windbreaks and planting of additional trees where necessary prior to approving the farm conservation plan. Windbreaks will be at 660 foot intervals and will run from east to west unless the Division of Agriculture, SCS, or the Matanuska-Susitna Borough requires or approves a different interval or a different orientation based on information about wind direction at the particular farm. [SELECTIVE TIMBER HARVEST WITHIN WINDBREAKS IS PERMISSIBLE FOR EITHER COMMERCIAL OR PERSONAL USE (IN ORDER TO ALLOW SELECTIVE TIMBER HARVESTING PRIOR TO IDENTIFICATION OF WIND BREAKS.) CLEARCUTTING WITHIN WINDBREAKS IS PROHIBITED. IF TIMBER IS TO BE HARVESTED BY CLEARCUTTING, WINDBREAKS MUST BE IDENTIFIED FIRST.] Pass-throughs up to 30 feet wide will be allowed, taking advantage of natural breaks in the vegetation to allow for equipment travel. Pass-throughs should be specified in the farm conservation plans. If further information shows that windbreaks are not necessary in the judgment of the Division of Agriculture or the Matanuska-Susitna Borough, farm conservation plans may be amended to allow clearing and cultivation of the windbreaks.

Forestry Management Intent, page 55, is amended to read:

There are two primary management goals for the timber in the Fish Creek unit. One is to salvage and utilize the valuable timber as part of or separately from the development of the agricultural tracts. Secondly, forest stands in the publicly-owned wetland buffers, recreation corridors, and the Moraine Ridge subunit will be managed to support the primary uses designated for these areas (wetland protection; recreation; and residential, commercial, and industrial development, respectively). Timber in these areas may be available for limited cutting using guidelines listed below.

Forestry Planned Actions, pages 55 and 56, paragraphs 2 and 3, is amended to read:

The first [SECOND] alternative is the selected alternative. This alternative was selected because an agricultural rights sale has not been scheduled and is not expected to be scheduled in the foreseeable future due to the state's current economic and budget situation. The Division of Forestry has received a request for a timber sale in this area, indicating that the market for timber resources may have changed since this plan was adopted on 8/15/84. It now appears that the value of the timber resource may be sufficient to cover costs of the timber

harvest and construction of winter haul roads into the area. Given the changed economic conditions, it is in the public's best interest to amend this plan to allow a timber sale to occur prior to the agricultural rights sale. Whether or not the market for timber is now strong enough to provide sufficient return to cover both the costs of timber harvest and winter access will be determined by the success or lack thereof of the proposed timber sale. However, timber harvesting must be completed by 1/1/1995. If this does not occur, this amendment is invalid and the original requirements of this plan must be followed. In that event, the second alternative will again become the selected alternative. [IT BEST MEETS THE TWO OBJECTIVES OF UTILIZING BOTH THE AGRICULTURAL AND TIMBER RESOURCES. ASSUMING THAT TIMBER WILL BE HARVESTED AND FARM LANDS DEVELOPED, THE HIGHEST RETURN FROM EACH WILL BE REALIZED. UNFORTUNATELY, IT IS NOT POSSIBLE TO OBTAIN THE MAXIMUM RETURN FROM DEVELOPMENT OF ONE OF THESE RESOURCES WITHOUT NEGATIVELY AFFECTING THE OTHER. ROADS ARE ESSENTIAL FOR AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION. THE ECONOMIC ANALYSIS BY THE DIVISION OF AGRICULTURE ESTIMATES THAT THE POTENTIAL RETURN (PRESENT VALUE OF BENEFITS LESS PRESENT VALUE OF ON-FARM COSTS) FROM AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT COULD BE SUFFICIENT TO OFFSET THE COST OF ROAD CONSTRUCTION (PRESENT VALUE OF OFF-FARM COSTS). TIMBER HARVEST ALSO CANNOT TAKE PLACE WITHOUT ROADS. THE VALUE (QUALITY, VOLUME, AND PRICE) OF TIMBER AT FISH CREEK IS INSUFFICIENT TO COVER COSTS ASSOCIATED WITH TIMBER HARVEST AS WELL AS ROAD CONSTRUCTION. TO FURTHER COMPLICATE THE PROBLEM, THE TIMBER MARKET IS NOT STRONG ENOUGH TO UTILIZE THE TIMBER WITHIN A REASONABLE PERIOD OF TIME FOLLOWING ROAD CONSTRUCTION (SUCH AS THREE TO FIVE YEARS). FULL UTILIZATION OF THE TIMBER, GIVEN THE PRESENT INDUSTRY AND MARKET SITUATION, WOULD PROBABLY REQUIRE A DELAY OF TEN YEARS BETWEEN ROAD CONSTRUCTION AND SALE OF AGRICULTURAL TRACTS. SUCH A DELAY WOULD SIGNIFICANTLY REDUCE THE NET PRESENT VALUE TO BE GAINED FROM AGRICULTURE. THUS THE ENTIRE PROJECT (BOTH TIMBER AND AGRICULTURE) BECOMES LESS FEASIBLE. LOOKING AT IT ANOTHER WAY, IF THE STATE INVESTS \$17 MILLION TO BUILD ROADS IN FISH CREEK, TEN YEARS OF DELAY IN AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT RESULTS IN TEN YEARS BEFORE SIGNIFICANT RETURN ON THE INVESTMENT BEGINS. SUCH A DELAY COULD BE JUSTIFIED IF THE LOSS OF RETURN FROM AGRICULTURE WERE TO BE OFFSET BY RETURN FROM TIMBER. THAT DOES NOT APPEAR TO BE THE CASE. THEREFORE, IF ROADS ARE CONSTRUCTED FOR BOTH LOGGING AND FARM USE, INVESTMENT COSTS WILL BE OFFSET PRIMARILY BY THE VALUES GENERATED BY AGRICULTURE. GIVEN THIS FACT AND THE SIGNIFICANT REDUCTION IN THE NET PRESENT VALUE OF AGRICULTURAL BENEFITS CAUSED BY A TEN YEAR DELAY, SUCH A DELAY IS NOT WARRANTED.

AT LEAST PART OF THE TIMBER CAN, HOWEVER, BE HARVESTED THROUGH SALES BY INDIVIDUAL FARMERS UNDER THE GUIDELINES IN THIS PLAN (SEE FORESTRY GUIDELINE #2 BELOW). THE DIVISION OF FORESTRY ESTIMATES THAT NEARLY AS MUCH TIMBER WOULD BE SALVAGED BY FARMERS AS COULD BE HARVESTED BY STATE AND BOROUGH TIMBER SALES IF HARVEST WERE RESTRICTED TO A THREE TO FIVE YEAR PERIOD. THE

STATE AND BOROUGH WOULD ALSO NEED TO IDENTIFY NON-CUTTING AREAS SUCH AS FARMSTEADS AND WINDBREAKS PRIOR TO TIMBER SALES. GENERALLY FARMERS PREFER TO LAY OUT FARMSTEADS AND WINDBREAKS THEMSELVES. SINCE IT IS UNLIKELY THAT PUBLIC OFFICIALS COULD SATISFY FARMERS IN THE LOCATION OF FARMSTEADS AND WINDBREAKS, AND SINCE THE VALUE OF THE TIMBER SOLD BY FARMERS IS EXPECTED TO NEARLY EQUAL PUBLIC SALES RESTRICTED TO A THREE TO FIVE YEAR PERIODS, SELLING THE TIMBER WITH THE LAND AND PROVIDING AN INCENTIVE TO ENCOURAGE FARMERS TO SALVAGE THE TIMBER IS THE BEST ALTERNATIVE.]

Forestry Guideline 13, page 58, is amended to read:

Trails: timber harvest in the corridors for the Iditarod Trail and the Yohn Lake to Susitna and Nancy Lake Loop trails will be allowed only if such harvest protects or enhances the use or visual, sound, and other characteristics of the trail. Division of Parks must be consulted in making this decision on state lands. All three trails may be crossed by logging roads. The crossings will be at approximately 90 degree angles and will be kept to a minimum. The locations will be determined in consultation with Div. of Parks.

Forestry Guideline 21, page 59, Reevaluation of timber sale potential, is repealed.

Forestry Guidelines, page 59, are amended by adding a new section of guidelines to read:

Timber Sales.

21. In the event that a timber sale does occur prior to the sale of agricultural rights, at the time of timber harvest the Divisions of Forestry and Agriculture will analyze the hazards of wind erosion and, if determined to be a problem, will take the steps necessary to prevent wind erosion.
22. If timber harvest occurs prior to the agricultural rights sale, an entire tract must be cleared prior to beginning harvest on another tract.
23. Slash and organic matter must be placed so that it does not endanger the Water Quality Standards of any state waters.
24. In addition to the normal notice requirements for a timber sale, specific notice of the sale must be given to those who commented on this amendment so that that they may comment on the more specific stipulations that will be incorporated in the sale contract.

Transportation Guidelines, page 76, are amended by adding a new guideline to read:

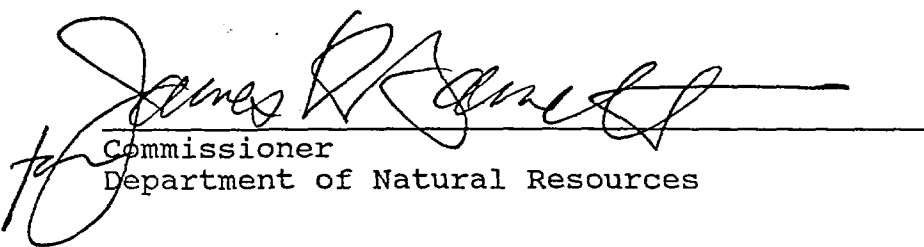
18. If a timber sale is held prior to sale of the agricultural rights, access may be by winter haul roads. Winter haul roads need not meet the standards for first generation roads listed above in transportation guideline 7, but must be constructed in a manner that complies with the Forest Practices Act and will not result in erosion or damage to the streams. If initial access into the Fish Creek project area is via winter haul roads, it must be from the south, across the Little Susitna River. This enables the Division of Forestry to better control unauthorized use of the winter haul roads. Authorized use of these winter haul roads will occur only at times when such use will not result in damage to streams or the roadway, generally winter. The Division of Forestry will use all feasible means necessary to prevent unauthorized use of these haul roads when such use may be damaging. Methods used may include an ice bridge or a year round bridge that is gated. The main access routes within the project area will follow the road alignment specified in this plan. The road alignment will be identified by Division of Forestry in the field. In addition, the following requirements must be met:
 - a. Within the road right-of-way for the main access route a 100 foot wide corridor will be cleared and grubbed. (Grubbed for this project means that stumps are removed or are cut flush with or below ground level.)
 - b. No slash or organic material piles may be buried within or left on the 100 foot road area.
 - c. All grades on the main access road will be 10% or less.

Fish and Wildlife Guidelines, page 80, are amended by adding new guidelines to read:

7. During the interim period provided by the amendment to this plan, big game enhancement projects are authorized to occur in the Fish Creek management area. The intent is to utilize the timber harvest to enhance productive moose habitat, so long as this does not detract from the agricultural potential of the area or conflict with the primary intent of enhancing the area's agricultural potential through the timber sale.

Note: The policies of the Fish Creek Management Plan are contained in pages 45 - 86 in the document (the green pages). Therefore, only this section is amended. The balance of the document contains background information or elaborates on the implementation.

This amendment is adopted under AS 38.04.065 and 11 AAC 55.010-.030.



Commissioner
Department of Natural Resources

March 2, 1987
Date